

VZCZCXRO1325
OO RUEHDA
DE RUEHAK #6716/01 3551325
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 211325Z DEC 06 ZDK
FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0384
RUEKJCS/CJCS WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC//PA
RUEUITH/ODC ANKARA TU
INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 7682
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 1834
RUEHDA/AMCONSUL ADANA 1454
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 5635
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO 5361
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2017
RUEUITH/DET 1 39LG ANKARA TU
RHMFIUU/USDOCO 6ATAF IZMIR TU
RHMFIUU/39OS INCIRLIK AB TU
RHMFIUU/AFOSI DET 523 IZMIR TU
RHMFIUU/39ABG INCIRLIK AB TU
RHMFIUU/AFOSI DET 522 INCIRLIK AB TU
RUEUITH/AFLO ANKARA TU

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 006716

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EUR/SE, EUR/PD, NEA/PD, DRL
JCS PASS J-5/CDR S. WRIGHT

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2006

In Today's Papers

Early Election Debate

All papers report that AKP officials said on the issue of a mass resignation from Parliament that the General Assembly had to approve any resignation from the Parliament, meaning that the idea that the opposition could force early elections with a parliamentary walk-out was unrealistic. PM Erdogan claimed that only two parties would enter the Parliament in the next elections and that the main opposition party, the CHP, would lose votes. When asked about the Presidential candidate, Erdogan said that they would hold polls and listen to the views of the public, their deputies, the party organization and the relevant institutions before reaching a decision on a candidate. Hurriyet quoted CHP leader Deniz Baykal as saying that the idea of a mass resignation was not rational, and they would continue to work for an early election.

EU Agrees to Open Single Chapter in Accession Talks

All papers report that the Permanent Representatives of EU members agreed on Wednesday to send an invitation letter to Turkey to open talks on only one chapter, enterprise and industry policy. The decision falls short of Turkey's expectations that talks would open on four chapters.

Erdogan Urges US to Set Iraq Withdrawal Timetable

All papers: Today's papers covered the remarks that PM Erdogan gave before his departure from New York. Speaking to the press, Erdogan suggested that the US announce a timetable for withdrawing troops from Iraq. He termed the situation in Iraq a civil war and stressed that the number of US troops in Iraq should be reduced gradually. Erdogan also opposed the holding of early elections in Palestine. He noted that if the Palestinian President decides by himself to go to elections then this would mean he was ignoring Hamas, which was carried to power by the Palestinian people.

Cross-Border Operation: Bargaining with the US

Radikal reports that Turkey's special envoy for countering PKK

terrorism retired General Edip Baser said that at the meeting in Stuttgart on December 11 with his American counterpart retired General Joseph Ralston they spoke about the possibilities of a cross-border operation into Iraq and asked the US not to oppose it if Turkey were to decide such an action was necessary. Baser said that the US officials showed understanding for the Turkish thesis that if the US pressures the Iraqi government and Kurdish groups, then the PKK camps in northern Iraq will be dispersed, arms will be laid down, and there will be no need for a military operation,.

Commentary on Iraq

Columnist Soli Ozel, writing in the mass appeal Sabah, warns the US against creating the impression of favoring Shiites in Iraq: "So far Iran benefited the most from US mistakes in the region and currently Iran is making efforts to expand its regional hegemony -- a disturbing factor for Iraq and the other neighbors of Iran. In that respect, the steps by the US administration for correcting the Iraq fiasco are very important and are being watched by the regional countries. As for the Bush administration, there are increasing signs of Washington being stubborn once again and not making a policy change. Yet it will be very hard for President Bush to persuade the military to send additional troops to Iraq. Eventually he will have to look for help and support from the countries in the region. If and when that happens, Washington should be very careful to not take side with the Shiites. If there is a perception of favoring Shiites and Iran, it will only trigger a war between Sunnis and Shiites."

Writing in the mainstream Milliyet, Sami Kohen expresses disappointment after reading the Washington Post interview with President Bush: "President Bush changed his rhetoric on Iraq in a short time. Just a month ago, he was claiming victory while at

ANKARA 00006716 002 OF 002

present he talks about neither winning nor losing in Iraq. On the other hand, President Bush still leans toward increasing the number of US forces in Iraq temporarily. It seems the final decision on this issue will wait until the new Secretary of Defense comes back to Washington from Iraq. President Bush and his generals may think of sending some more troops as a tactical move in order to avoid a 'loser' image. However political reality shows just the opposite. If the US administration sends more forces there instead of pulling out, the perception will be entirely against American interests because everybody will interpret it as a sign of a permanent American presence. Following the Baker-Hamilton report, there is an overall expectation of change from Washington in both military and political strategy. The recent interview by President Bush in the Washington Post is not giving any hope in this regard."

US Senate Vetoes Ambassador Hoagland Assignment to Yerevan
Cumhuriyet reports that the US Senate has returned to the President Richard Hoagland's nomination as Ambassador to Armenia, citing his refusal to recognize the so-called Armenian Genocide. The Armenian lobby in the US fiercely opposed Hoagland's nomination after the diplomat refused to recognize the "genocide" in his statements. Under Senate rules, the Senate cannot reconsider nominees who were neither confirmed nor turned down until the President reintroduces them again at the next Congressional session. When the new Congress reconvenes after the New Year, the President can introduce a new nominee. Alternately, while Congress is not in session he can name Hoagland to the post in a temporary recess appointment.

TV Highlights NTV, 6.00 A.M.

Domestic News

- A doctor from Numune Hospital in Konya has been removed from his post following his allegations that two female radiologists in the hospital had refused to perform ultrasound scans of the testicles of a 17 year old patient.

- Labor Minister Basesgioglu has signaled that social security reforms might be delayed

International News

- Italian prosecutor demands prison sentences for DHKP-C militants facing trial in Italy
- British Prime Minister Tony Blair has urged Middle Eastern states to help rein in the 'forces of extremism' in Iran and to advance peace between Israelis and Palestinians
- The report from the Committee to Protect Journalists says at least 32 journalists have been killed in Iraq this year, adding that this number is the highest one-year toll ever in a single country.
Visit Ankara's Classified Web Site at

<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

WILSON